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INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 6977
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 4332
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 8217
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 5462
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 2689
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 2864
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 4766
RUEHQD/AMEMBASSY QUITO 5323
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 9929
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA 0454
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C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 002129

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/02/2017

TAGS: ECON PGOV PREL BL

SUBJECT: TENSIONS HIGH AHEAD OF AUGUST 6 INDEPENDENCE DAY

REF: LA PAZ 2020

Classified By: Amb. Philip S. Goldberg for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Tensions are high ahead of Bolivian Independence Day on August 6 and Armed Forces Day on August 7. Seven of nine departmental civic committees issued a declaration on August 1 calling for the resignation of five ministers, a two-thirds majority vote for the new constitution, and departmental autonomy. Congress is in heated negotiations to extend the Constituent Assembly (CA) until December 14 before the August 6 deadline, and the GOB is pushing ahead with its plans to hold a military-indigenous parade in Santa Cruz on August 7.

Despite public calls for calm from Santa Cruz Prefect Ruben Costas and Armed Forces commanders, the possibility for violence in Santa Cruz exists. End summary.

CIVIC COMMITTEES ISSUE COMMUNIQUE

¶2. (C) In a meeting held in Tarija on August 1, the civic committees of all of the country's departments except La Paz and Potosi signed a document asking for the resignation of the hydrocarbons, economic development, finance, and rural development ministers, as well as the deputy land minister. In the document the committees demand that the MAS party comply with the special law through which the Constituent Assembly was convened and Article 232 of the Constitution, both of which stipulate that all articles of the new constitutional text must be passed by a two-thirds majority vote. Additionally they demand the implementation of the departmental autonomy system in accordance with the July 2, 2006 referendum results, respect for the country's departmental division, respect for private property, and respect for the current departmental royalties' allocation system. The committees decided to suspend all demonstrations (cabildos) until after independence day. They also issued a formal invitation to President Evo Morales to attend a meeting schedule for August 8 in Santa Cruz. Santa Cruz Civic Committee Advisor Jimmy Ortiz told Emboff the main point of the document is to lay down a unified marker stating

that the committees will not accept a new constitution that has not been approved by a national referendum.

CONGRESS CLOSE TO A CA DEAL

¶13. (U) As of August 2, congress has not formally approved the extension of the CA beyond August 6, despite agreements between the MAS and PODEMOS within the CA to extend it until December 14. However, an agreement seems close at hand. The biggest sticking point has been PODEMOS' request for two separate referendums; one on the dissenting articles, and a second referendum on the total document (as envisioned in the existing convoking legislation). The MAS has said it wants a single referendum, or both referendums conducted on the same day. Vice President Garcia Linera continues to broker the congressional negotiations.

ARMED FORCES AND INDIGENOUS PARADE IN SANTA CRUZ

¶14. (C) Army Commander Freddy Bersatti announced that only the national flag will be allowed in the combined military and indigenous parade in Santa Cruz on August 7 (Armed Forces Day). Minister of Government Alfredo Rada later contradicted the commander, saying that all symbols would be allowed. Many residents of Santa Cruz consider the parade a provocation, and some observers are predicting violence. Reportedly over 30 indigenous groups (including the radical poncho rojos) will march with the military. The National Private Entrepreneurs Federation (composed of eastern and western business chambers) issued a manifesto on July 31 warning that "any blood shed during the August 7 military parade with indigenous participation will be the national government's responsibility." Bolivian armed forces sources have told Post that although the Air Force will provide extra security, there is a chance for violence but that it should not be widespread because the parade will be contained within the El Trompillo military airport grounds. The Santa Cruz Civic Committee is scheduled to meet the evening of August 2 to define its stance regarding the parade.

COMMENT

¶15. (C) With the civic committees postponing cabildos until after August 6 and congress nearing an agreement to extend the CA, the remaining hot spot is Santa Cruz and the military-indigenous parade scheduled for August 7. Of particular note is the participation of the Oruro and Chuquisaca civic committees in the August 1 Tarija meeting. Chuquisaca is increasingly aligning itself with the eastern departments (media luna) due to their support for moving the capital (Reftel). NAS will temporarily move its assets out of El Trompillo airport ahead of August 7. Despite public calls for calm from Santa Cruz Prefect Ruben Costas and Armed Forces commanders the possibility for violence in Santa Cruz exists. End comment.

GOLDBERG